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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 30th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium)

later: Mr. BARIMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 132: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued)

(a) FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued)

(b) RELOCATION OF BELARUS AND UKRAINE TO THE GROUP OF MEMBER STATES SET OUT IN PARAGRAPH 3 (c) OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 43/232 (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 111: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 132: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued) (A/48/421 and Add.1, A/48/622, A/48/912 and A/48/945 and Corr.1; A/49/557, A/49/664 and Add.1 and A/49/717)

(a) FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS (continued)

(b) RELOCATION OF BELARUS AND UKRAINE TO THE GROUP OF MEMBER STATES SET OUT IN PARAGRAPH 3 (c) OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 43/232 (continued)

1. Mr. OWADE (Kenya) said that there were many issues of vital interest in connection with the management of peace-keeping operations, which now accounted for the largest portion of the United Nations budget. In that regard, he endorsed the comments made by the representative of Algeria.

2. While the development of a rational system of budgeting, financing and administration was of paramount importance, the need for Member States to pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions could not be overemphasized. However efficient the system might be, there would be no improvement unless Member States, in particular major contributors, honoured their obligations.

3. Kenya had consistently supported the concept of the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund. With regard to the Secretary-General's proposal for an increase in the level of the Fund to $800 million, his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) that such a decision would not in itself alleviate the cash-flow problem (A/49/664, para. 19). He endorsed the proposal that the peace-keeping budget period should run from 1 July to 30 June, and believed that that cycle should be established as soon as possible. His delegation also welcomed the other proposals made relating to the rationalization of the budget.

4. While he would welcome the establishment of start-up team rosters, as proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/48/945 and Corr.1), he was of the view that specific information on the criteria for inclusion in those rosters needed to be furnished. His delegation shared the Advisory Committee's concerns with regard to international contractual personnel, in particular with regard to the apparent irregularities in recruitment and deployment and the lack of any clear delineation of their relationship with United Nations personnel. The fact that the international personnel system had apparently provided a "back-door" entry to the United Nations system must also be addressed. There was a need for transparency in connection with such recruitment, which must respect the principle of equitable geographical distribution. In that regard, the Advisory Committee's comment on the narrow geographical representation in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) gave cause for concern. His delegation agreed that a thorough evaluation of the international contractual

personnel system should be undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services before any extension to other missions was contemplated.

5. With respect to compensation for death, injury and disability, he said that the current practice of reimbursing Governments for compensation actually paid had resulted in a wide range of payments. While the issue was complex, certain principles should guide the General Assembly in devising an acceptable formula: equal treatment of States and, as a logical extension, equal treatment of personnel irrespective of nationality; equal payment and equal compensation for equal work; actual compensation to the beneficiary should not be lower than reimbursement by the United Nations; and the system should be easy to understand and administer. The two options suggested by the Secretary-General in paragraph 71 of his report (A/48/945) needed to be examined critically in the light of those principles.

6. His delegation welcomed the recent steps which had been taken to make reimbursements to troop-contributing countries, in particular the proposal to establish comprehensive standards for each category of equipment.

7. Lastly, he welcomed the Secretary-General's acknowledgement of the crucial role played by neighbouring countries in providing essential logistical support and his recommendation that the General Assembly might wish to give consideration to "good neighbour" agreements with countries neighbouring a mission area (A/48/945, para. 106). As one such country, Kenya supported any effort to formalize the dialogue between the United Nations and neighbouring countries which was essential to the success of a mission.

8. Mr. BIRENBAUM (United States of America) said that his delegation strongly supported reforms to streamline the current peace-keeping budget process, such as the de-linking of budget cycles from mandate periods, the annualization of the budget cycle, the revision of budget formats and the establishment of a standardized costing system. Such reforms would help to prevent bottlenecks and to focus the reviews of peace-keeping budgets by both the Advisory Committee and the Fifth Committee.

9. His delegation also supported efforts to improve performance reporting. Timely and reliable data on how funds were actually spent were of enormous help when decisions had to be made on future spending. A computerized system linking operations in the field and Headquarters was required to collect and transmit such data. A consolidated peace-keeping budget, which would give the Committee a broad perspective and enable it to compare missions, would also promote informed decision-making.

10. His delegation favoured measures to accelerate the flow of funds to peace-keeping missions, particularly when they were starting up or expanding. While the Secretary-General's proposal to assess Member States for one third of the preliminary estimate of the cost had much to commend it, he agreed with ACABQ that such an approach should await the introduction of a reliable system of standard costs. For the time being, the United States endorsed the Advisory Committee's proposal that the limit of commitment authority should be increased

from $10 million to $50 million. His delegation also supported the use of the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund, adequately funded and with proper controls, as a means of enabling the Organization to respond to urgent peace-keeping needs. Making credits payable to Member States conditional on full payment of assessments would create a new administrative burden and would not result in an improved record of payment.

11. In view of the need to inform residents in the areas of peace-keeping missions of political developments and mission activities, a significant amount of the funds provided to the Department of Public Information should be used for public information activities in peace-keeping missions.

12. A special study should be made of the resources necessary to audit peace-keeping activities. A plan should be developed which would provide for audit activities at Headquarters and in the field; in that connection, consideration should be given to the use of audit firms.

13. The concept of using international contractual personnel had merit in that it offered the potential advantages of more rapid deployment of support staff and lower cost. An evaluation should be undertaken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and efforts should then be made to correct the problems that had been identified - in particular, to ensure that policy-making remained a responsibility of the Organization and was not contracted out.

14. The Secretary-General should carry out a complete review of the mission subsistence allowance system; the system should be comprehensive and transparent and should take due account of the authority of the Secretary-General to assign staff to any United Nations activity or office in the world. The United States had supported peace-keeping operations by seconding qualified personnel, and he urged other Member States to consider providing similar support.

15. His delegation agreed that the arrangements for compensation for death and disability should be equitable and appropriate. The Secretariat should prepare an analysis of the cost implications of any proposed changes in the current methodology. He endorsed the intention to expand the authorized local procurement area for field missions to include all Member and observer States, not only those in the region, as a step towards increasing competition and reducing costs. The issue of new standards for reimbursement in respect of contingent-owned equipment had remained unresolved for too long, and must be addressed. Moreover, contingency contracting for ready transport capability must be seriously examined. Such arrangements must be made in advance of the need, on the basis of open international competitive bidding.

16. Lastly, his delegation strongly supported efforts to develop host country and "good neighbour" agreements. Those countries which benefited from United Nations peace-keeping operations must do everything they could to support operations and reduce their costs and more of them should make substantial voluntary contributions. Host country agreements should, inter alia, provide for rent-free accommodation and the waiving of taxes and charges.

17. Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil) said that the surge in the number of peace-keeping operations over the past few years appeared to have extended the capacity of the Organization to its limits. There were growing signs of fatigue on the part of troop-contributing States, while the Secretariat support structure had not been able to keep pace. Moreover, because of its workload, the General Assembly was not able to exercise fully its oversight prerogatives.

18. The problem should be approached in its entirety. Standard arrangements for the administration of peace-keeping activities should be applied as a general rule and any departures therefrom should be justified by a clear rationale. It was important to assess whether the expansion in peace-keeping operations was likely to continue, particularly in view of current efforts to bring an end to the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) and the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). It might reasonably be assumed that the peak had passed.

19. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's views on the financing of peace-keeping operations, and agreed that the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund should not be increased at the present stage. Until a solution was found to the cash-flow imbalance, any additional reserve funds would merely add to the burden of those Member States which honoured their obligations.

20. The special scale for the apportionment of the costs of peace-keeping operations should be institutionalized, as it embodied valid political and economic considerations. In particular, it reflected the decision-making structure of the Organization and took into account capacity to pay. With regard to the different options in connection with start-up costs, any recommendation should not detract from the prerogatives of the General Assembly under Article 17 of the Charter.

21. His delegation welcomed the proposal to de-link the financial period from the mandate period. Although that would mean institutionalizing the fact that the Fifth Committee would be virtually in permanent session, that was inevitable in view of the Committee's responsibility for examining the financial implications of Security Council decisions. Consideration would, however, need to be given to the political implications of viewing a peace-keeping operation as stable and thus capable of being fitted into the special financial period. In fact, the concept of stability was contrary to one basic tenet of such operations, namely that they were not an end in themselves. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee's reasons for not recommending a unified peace-keeping budget.

22. The Office of Internal Oversight Services should evaluate procedures relating to contractual personnel. While cost-effectiveness was relevant, due account should be taken of the need to avoid discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race or gender.

23. On the question of death and disability benefits, the principle of equal treatment was not being observed. Artificial distinctions in the treatment of those who risked their lives could not be allowed to continue. His delegation

looked forward to the review of efforts to devise a new system of reimbursement in respect of contingent-owned equipment, and agreed that there was a need to ensure transparency and impartiality in procurement procedures with a view to emphasizing competition.

24. Mr. MWAKAWAGO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that, in view of the international community's recent experience in the field of peace-keeping operations, the urgency of reviewing the administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of those operations could not be overstated. His delegation thus associated itself with the views expressed by the Chairman of the Group of 77 when addressing the Committee on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Committee's search for solutions should be guided by the provisions of the Charter and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and the reforms considered should lead to greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability.

25. His delegation commended the efforts by the Secretary-General to enhance the Organization's capability to plan and manage logistical, financial and human resources in peace-keeping operations. In view of the proliferation of conflicts around the world requiring United Nations intervention, peace-keeping operations called for the clear demarcation of lines of authority and mandates, and for thorough coordination. Where financial and personnel matters were concerned, his delegation took the view that questions of human rights and humanitarian assistance should be addressed separately from those relating to peace-keeping functions.

26. The serious financial problems faced by the Organization were exacerbated by the dramatic increase in United Nations involvement in peace-keeping activities and by the failure of Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. The Secretary-General's initiatives, particularly those aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability, deserved support, and his country's contribution in that regard would be made with an open mind.

27. With regard to the operations of the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund and the commitment authority, his delegation appealed to the Committee to examine the changed environment and experience in the light of General Assembly resolutions 47/217 and 44/203 and make appropriate recommendations. There was some merit in the proposal that an annual cost estimate should be developed for those operations whose budgetary and operational requirements were more or less stable; that would help to streamline the work of the Committee in dealing with budget estimates for peace-keeping operations. His delegation was, however, unhappy with the proposal regarding the presentation of a consolidated budget estimate for all peace-keeping operations, and took the view that, for obvious reasons, each operation's budget should be presented separately.

28. Referring to the section of the report of the Secretary-General (A/48/707) on the use of civilian personnel in peace-keeping operations, in particular the use of international service agencies, he said that the questions raised in paragraphs 68 to 72 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/49/664) were critical enough to deserve serious consideration. Issues that had been brought

to the fore included geographical representation, recruitment procedures and their impact on the United Nations personnel system, and the criteria for the selection of the agencies involved. His delegation endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General should request the Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) to carry out a thorough investigation (A/49/664, para. 72).

29. Another issue requiring urgent attention was the question of compensation for death and disability. It was impossible to comprehend the logic behind the discrepancies in the payments made to contingent personnel, military observers and other staff in the event of death or disability. There could be no justification for awarding different levels of compensation ranging from $19,500 to $85,300 in respect of loss of life suffered in similar circumstances by personnel serving the same Organization on the same duty assignment.

30. Mr. BARIMANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation also associated itself with the views expressed by the Chairman of the Group of 77 in his address to the Committee on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The unprecedented expansion of peace-keeping operations required full mobilization of the United Nations in order to respond in a timely fashion to the demands and challenges facing it. At the same time, the Organization's ability to cope with the various aspects of peace-keeping operations must be regularly assessed by Member States. His delegation appreciated the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the Organization's capacity for the planning and implementation of peace-keeping operations. In that regard, it supported the various proposals made by ACABQ. With regard to the proposal contained in paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's report (A/48/945) that humanitarian assistance should fall under the overall umbrella of peace-keeping operations, his delegation emphasized the impartiality of humanitarian assistance; it believed that a clear distinction should be made between such activities and peace-keeping operations. As in the past, humanitarian assistance should be rendered through voluntary contributions.

31. On the proposal to increase the level of the Peace-keeping Reserve Fund to $800 million, his delegation recalled that the Fund had been established in order to solve the start-up cash flow problem. It did not believe that an increase in the level of the Fund at the present stage would help to alleviate the current cashflow problem. Rather, efforts should be made fully to capitalize existing reserve funds, as the Advisory Committee had stated (A/49/664, para. 19).

32. His delegation concurred with the view of the Secretary-General that the present level of the commitment authority might not be commensurate with the cash needs for the start-up costs of new or expanded missions; it could not, however, agree on the need for such a sharp increase as that proposed. As stated in the report of ACABQ, a level of $50 million for each decision of the Security Council would be far in excess of what was actually required. His delegation was also unable to agree with the proposal for a one third assessment of the preliminary estimate presented to the General Assembly.

33. With regard to the proposals concerning the peace-keeping budget cycle, it was understandable that multiple periods for each of the 15 ongoing peace-keeping operations caused considerable difficulties in terms both of record keeping and of the number of reports prepared on the financing of peace-keeping operations. His delegation shared the concern of the Advisory Committee that at any given time one or more peace-keeping operations were operating without legal financial authority. The recommendation of ACABQ that 1995 should be a transitional year, with a new budget and financial cycle starting on 1 July 1996, had merit, and could serve as a basis for the Committee's deliberations.

34. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen internal audit functions in peace-keeping operations, and agreed that the expertise of the resident internal auditors should be utilized. However, the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors also had an important role to play, especially in the case of the large field missions.

35. His delegation shared many of the concerns expressed with regard to international contractual personnel in paragraphs 68 to 72 of the report of ACABQ. All those concerns were subject to a full investigation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and he expected that the outcome of that investigation and the Office's recommendations would be made available to the General Assembly so that remedial action could be taken. On the question of compensation for death and disability, he said that the current system did not adequately reflect the established principle of equal compensation for equal work, and it should thus be amended.

36. Mr. ŠRÁMEK (Czech Republic) said that his delegation supported the far-reaching and comprehensive approach to the administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of peace-keeping operations set out in the Secretary-General's report (A/48/945), which should establish a solid financial and administrative base for dealing with the increasing number and scope of such operations. However, his delegation had very serious misgivings regarding the discontinuation of the work of the open-ended working group which had dealt with the question of grouping Member States for purposes of the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses during the previous session of the General Assembly. At that time, most Member States had agreed on the importance of establishing objective criteria to replace the existing ad hoc mechanism, the accuracy of which was dubious. Those ad hoc decisions of the Fifth Committee had been based on a mistaken assumption that the total output of separated economies equalled the output of the single economy they had replaced. That assumption was unjustified because the underlying economic conditions were different and because division brought smaller markets, more complex exchange procedures, quotas, tax barriers and other adverse consequences, all of which resulted in falling production and lower national income.

37. The assessment rate of the Czech Republic, as determined by the previous year's ad hoc decision, was three times larger than would have been the case, had it been derived from its own statistical data. Furthermore, the current methodology meant that such a huge discrepancy could not be balanced in the near

future. Those distortions were further exacerbated where the Member States in question had been wrongly grouped for purposes of the financing of peace-keeping. Thus, the financial burden on the Czech Republic per unit of national income might eventually be 15 times greater than that of comparable economies in the region.

38. It was understandable that those Member States which shouldered the bulk of the peace-keeping budget would not be happy at the prospect of a smaller number of countries in group B. On the other hand, countries with transitional economies which were suffering the consequences of division could not agree to be placed in the wrong group, and thus be grossly overburdened at the worst possible time for their economies. The financing of peace-keeping should be linked to the real capacity of States to pay. A working group should therefore be set up to establish verifiable and equitable criteria for the apportionment of peace-keeping expenses.

39. Ms. RODRIGUEZ (Cuba), referring to the statements made at earlier meetings by the representatives of Belarus and Ukraine, expressed the hope that a draft resolution could be produced during the current session taking into account the justifiable request by those States to be relocated in group C for purposes of the financing of peace-keeping operations.

40. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the contributions of delegations to the general discussion had assisted the Secretariat in its task of improving the planning and implementation of peace-keeping operations. In making specific proposals with regard to financial authority and assessment, the Secretary-General had been extremely aware of the responsibility and authority of the General Assembly for the review and approval of the budgets for peace-keeping operations. In recent years, difficulties had arisen regarding the level of financial authority. The Secretariat had proposed that the General Assembly should approve a higher level of commitment authority, ranging from $10 million to $50 million, depending on the specific situation. It was not proposed that the level should be $50 million for every peace-keeping mission: in the case of Rwanda, for instance, the level had been $47 million. Above that level, the General Assembly would have to meet to approve financial authority. The Secretariat's request that Member States should be assessed for one third of the preliminary estimates, or the financial authority, whichever was lower, applied only in the case of new missions. No performance report was necessary for new missions.

41. With regard to the extension of existing missions on a maintenance basis, the Secretariat had proposed an annual 12-month budget on the basis of a full budget submission in a synchronized manner; obviously, ACABQ and the General Assembly would review and approve the budget. Only when the Security Council had extended the mandate and the General Assembly had approved the budget would financial authority be extended and assessment approved; there would, however, be no need for a further submission to ACABQ and the General Assembly.

42. If an ongoing mission had to be expanded by the Security Council, the maintenance costs would already have been approved by the General Assembly, so

that only the portion of the mission to be expanded would be assessed on the basis of the preliminary estimate; the same procedure would apply to that portion as to a new mission. The General Assembly would need to meet again only if the level of commitment authority was exceeded. In all cases, budgets would be submitted individually and financial authority would be provided and Member States assessed only after the Security Council had adopted a decision to establish, expand or extend a mission's mandate.

43. With regard to the Peace-keeping reserve Fund, he noted the view expressed by many delegations that an increase in the level of the Fund would not automatically resolve the situation and that the first priority should be to ensure that the Fund was fully capitalized at the authorized level of $150 million. That could be done only if regular budget arrears were paid. Currently, the level of outstanding contributions to the regular budget amounted to $559 million. If Member States were to pay those outstanding contributions, an attempt could then be made to replenish the Fund gradually, in the light of the immediate requirements for the current regular budget programme.

44. On the question of specific transitional measures, he said that, if at its current session the General Assembly endorsed the Advisory Committee's proposal for a new budget cycle starting on 1 July 1996, the following transitional measures would have to take effect. In the case of operations whose next budget was due to be submitted during the period January-March 1995, for example, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II), the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) and the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), the next submission would cover the period up to 30 June 1995, as well as the period from July 1995 to June 1996; thereafter, the new budget cycle would start. In the case of operations such as the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the Secretariat proposed that at the current session, the General Assembly should provide financial authority until June 1996, after which the new cycle would begin. In the case of other operations whose budgets were currently being reviewed, financial authority could be provided in the usual manner and the budget to be submitted at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly would cover the period up to June 1996.

45. Some delegations had expressed disappointment that the Secretary-General had not submitted any specific proposals regarding compensation for death, injury and disability. Three important principles should be borne in mind in reviewing the arrangements: first, equitable treatment must be extended to all contingent personnel regardless of State of origin; second, the United Nations should not compensate at a level above that of the actual compensation awarded to the beneficiary; third, the procedures must be easy to administer. Having regard to those three principles, the Secretariat proposed two options: to maintain the current arrangement, whereby the United Nations reimbursed Member States after receipt of full certification, but subject to a ceiling to be agreed upon by the General Assembly; or to apply the policy currently applied to military observers, whereby the United Nations compensated the beneficiary directly, in an amount limited to twice the annual salary excluding allowances,

or $50,000, whichever was greater. It was difficult to devise a system that would take full account of all three principles, since those principles were to some extent mutually exclusive. However, either of the options proposed by the Secretariat would go a long way towards meeting concerns in that regard.

46. Many delegations had stressed the need for Member States to pay their contributions in full and on time. However perfect the system eventually devised, there could be no fundamental change in the financial situation unless Member States honoured their financial obligations. The Secretary-General thus urged Member States to make every effort to expedite their payments. At the same time, the Secretariat was keenly aware of the importance of efficient and effective management of the resources made available by Member States for peace-keeping operations, and would continue to make every effort to ensure that those resources were utilized in the most efficient manner.

AGENDA ITEM 111: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued) (A/49/32 and Add.1 to 3, A/49/212, A/49/276 and Add.1 and 2, and A/49/531; A/C.5/49/2/Rev.1, A/C.5/49/34 and Corr.1)

47. Mr. FLORENCIO (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group attached particular importance to conference services in view of the need to improve the efficiency and management of the Secretariat in a climate of scarce resources. It thus welcomed the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/49/32) and approved the revised calendar of conferences for 1995. Among the proposals for improvements in the management of conference services, the Rio Group singled out the use of account managers to rationalize the early stages of preparation of documentation in close cooperation with other departments and offices. In that connection, it agreed on the need for the systematic encouragement of team work. Staff training and the incorporation of appropriate technology and performance measurements were crucial to ensure a balance between quality, timeliness and cost-efficiency over the long term. The report on a comprehensive study on conference services (A/C.5/49/34) was a useful document, which would create greater awareness of the problems associated with conference services and suggest various options for solving those problems. The Rio Group shared the view of the Committee on Conferences, that the study offered a basis for the submission of budget proposals for the biennium 1996-1997, on the understanding that special attention should be accorded to the need for more transparent management indicators, more detailed information on the costs of meetings and documentation, and a detailed analysis of real demand for conference services.

48. With regard to the control and limitation of documentation, he said that the need for compliance with the six-week rule was indisputable. Timely issuance of documentation in all languages was essential for the constructive and informed participation of delegations in any negotiation. In the light of its knowledge of the internal process of the preparation and issuance of documents and statistics, the Rio Group considered that the time had come to explore guidelines to resolve a perennial problem which came to prominence only when there were delays in the issuance of documents.

49. Statistics, though important, were not conclusive and should be studied in the context of other variables as a basis for taking the required decisions. Discipline was required on the part of both the Secretariat and Member States in order to solve the documentation crisis, and the Rio Group supported the recommendations on that subject made by the Committee on Conferences. The time had perhaps come to study the possibility of setting time-limits that were realistic and could be respected.

50. The delegations of the Rio Group wished to express reservations regarding the recommendation in paragraph 66 of the Committee's report concerning the limitation of the documentation of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. He pointed out that the Council had not taken a decision on the document mentioned in that recommendation (E/1994/L.41), which had been transmitted for consideration to the Second Committee; the latter was consequently considering the matter, but there was as yet no agreement. The delegations of the Rio Group therefore considered that, before the Fifth Committee took any final decision on the limitation of the documentation of the Council, agreement should first be reached in the substantive bodies.

51. With reference to paragraph 54 of the report, the Rio Group considered it essential that verbatim records should continue to be provided for the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, in accordance with the decisions of those bodies.

52. The delegations of the Rio Group wished to convey their appreciation for the work done by the Committee on Conferences. They were confident that the reorganization of the Department of Administration and Management would be of benefit to the Office of Conference and Support Services, and would thus enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations and bring it closer to the attainment of its objectives as the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization approached.

53. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) said that she shared the concern expressed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services over the difficult situation faced by the Office of Conference and Support Services. The latter must be provided with the resources which it needed to carry out its functions effectively and her delegation therefore supported the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 65 of its report (A/49/32). Of crucial importance to the achievement of that objective was the restitution of the 19 posts which it was proposed to suppress and her delegation looked forward to additional information from the Secretary-General on the impact of the proposed suppression of posts on the delivery of conference services.

54. She welcomed the improved overall and average utilization of conference services and supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the core sample in the statistical analysis should be expanded. That recommendation, however, did not include the Security Council, which held a large number of meetings and whose working methods and procedures often resulted in low utilization of conference-servicing resources. If the General Assembly

was serious about reviewing the utilization of those resources, the Security Council should head the list of bodies included in the core sample. Her delegation wished to see that point duly reflected in the draft resolution which the Fifth Committee would adopt on the item.

55. Her delegation was also of the view that the experimental methodology for compiling statistics on the utilization of conference-servicing resources should continue to be applied so that any analysis of capacity utilization figures would take into account all the factors which had an impact on the most rational use of those resources. Resources could be used more efficiently if the Secretariat respected relevant legislative mandates and refrained from making proposals which bore no relation to the decisions of Member States.

56. Her delegation also endorsed the recommendations contained in paragraph 42 of the report of the Committee on Conferences concerning waivers to the rule that meetings of all subsidiary bodies should be held at their established headquarters.

57. With regard to the problems concerning the preparation of the verbatim and summary records of the various bodies, she said that while it was necessary to reduce the cost of those records, she could not accept the proposal to discontinue verbatim records for the sessions of the Conference on Disarmament, the First Committee and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, all of which were negotiating forums.

58. Unfortunately, the Secretariat's efforts to comply with the six-week rule for the issuance of pre-session documentation had not had the expected results. In the Fifth Committee, for example, constraints were often placed on the negotiating process because of excessive delays in the processing of documents. While it was true that an increasing number of documents was being requested by Member States, the complexity and importance of many of the deliberations of the Fifth Committee required a greater effort on the part of the Secretariat to make information available to Members in an efficient and timely manner.

59. Her delegation looked forward to the final results of the study on the organization, management and human resources requirements for the provision of adequate conference services, which had been requested by the General Assembly in resolution 48/228. It shared the view of the Committee on Conferences that the subsequent stages of the study should be carried out by internal consultants; that would permit a more rational use to be made of the Organization's resources.

60. Mr. GODA (Japan) said that, while his delegation was ready to adopt the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for 1995 as contained in annex I to the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/49/32), there were other issues that needed to be addressed, such as the control and limitation of documentation and the improvement of services, which had attained critical importance in view of the dramatic increase in the workload.

61. His delegation was pleased to note the increase in recent years in the overall and average utilization factors for the core sample of bodies. As for meeting records, he said that while his delegation recognized the problems faced by the Secretariat in providing timely documentation, it welcomed the initiative taken by the Committee on Conferences to review the need for the provision of meeting records. Such records, especially those of bodies of a political or legal nature, were extremely important to delegations, and the review of needs would require good communication with the substantive committees and bodies concerned.

62. Punctual issuance of documentation was a prerequisite for in-depth and meaningful discussions at conferences and meetings and his delegation had on several occasions urged that the six-week rule should be strictly observed, although it realized that prospects for achieving that goal were not encouraging. His delegation therefore endorsed the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 64 of its report concerning the need for a constructive dialogue between the Secretariat, Member States and all parties concerned on questions of documentation and the need for better coordination on documentation, in particular between the Office of Conference and Support Services and the substantive author departments.

63. Finally, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on a comprehensive study on conference services (A/C.5/49/34) and expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Organization to improve administration and management. The report contained many good suggestions and ideas for improving services, such as the strengthening of communication with other Secretariat offices and Member States in order to improve conference and documentation services; better planning capacity; the introduction of new performance indicators and new technology; and enhanced staff training. His delegation urged that those proposals be implemented in coordination with other Secretariat departments.

64. Mr. THUM (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union and Austria, said that, the efficient and cost-effective use of conference services was more important than ever. The European Union and Austria supported most of the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences which, it was hoped, would help to rationalize and improve the use of conference facilities and services.

65. The European Union remained convinced that a review of the question of the Committee's standard-setting powers could best be carried out in the light of recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, which had proposed that the role of the Committee on Conferences should be strengthened and that it should be given broader responsibilities.

66. In view of the potential proliferation of major international conferences which had emerged during the current session of the General Assembly, the European Union and Austria wished to caution against the risk that the role and purpose of the main organs of the Organization, as outlined in the Charter, in

particular the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, might be diminished.

67. Referring to the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings, he said that the European Union and Austria supported the Committee's recommendations and felt that the requests contained in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Committee's report were of particular importance.

68. It was gratifying to note that there had been an increase in the overall rate of utilization of conference-servicing resources, which had now reached 84 per cent, and in the average utilization rate, which was now 83 per cent. However, the utilization rates of certain United Nations bodies were unfortunately below the benchmark figures and he supported the Committee's recommendation to the General Assembly that those bodies be urged to review their requests for conference services with a view to ensuring the most effective use of the Organization's resources.

69. The European Union and Austria welcomed the Committee's recommendation that the waiver of the requirement to hold meetings at their established headquarters granted to the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council should be discontinued. They attached particular importance to the continuation of the headquarters rule and requested information about the potential cost implications of granting exceptions.

70. It was regrettable that, despite the introduction of new technology, improved productivity and the reduction of costs in the area of conference servicing, the situation with regard to the timeliness and quality of documentation remained critical. The Member States and the Secretariat, within their respective fields of competence, had a common responsibility to take corrective action. The Member States expected the Secretariat to produce the documentation required in compliance with the page limits and time-limits mandated by the General Assembly. The European Union and Austria supported the Committee's recommendations that the chairmen of those bodies which consistently under-utilized conference-servicing resources should be requested to review their need for meeting records and to propose to Member States once again that time-limits on statements should be adopted at the beginning of each session. The timely issuance of summary records was particularly important for the work of delegations.

71. In conclusion, he welcomed the proposal regarding the improvement of facilities for bilateral meetings and contacts during the period of the general debate in the General Assembly and suggested that it should be included in the general resolution on conference services. The proposal that the improvement should be effected within existing resources was also to be welcomed.

72. Ms. ZHANG Hong (China) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the control and limitation of documentation (A/49/531) gave a comprehensive account of compliance with the rules and regulations for the timely issuance of documentation, explained the causes of the documentation crisis and contained many useful proposals which shed light on the problems. The quality, timeliness

and efficiency of conference services had a direct bearing on the functioning of the United Nations system. In view of the adverse effect of the late issuance of documentation on the work of some organs, her delegation fully endorsed the view of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should pay the utmost attention to improving the quality of conference services.

73. Recent developments had brought opportunities, as well as challenges, for the United Nations. The role of the Organization had been strengthened and the activities of the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies had expanded; as a result, there had been a dramatic increase in the conference-servicing workload. Various factors, such as the restructuring of the Secretariat, technological innovation and staff reductions in the Office of Conference and Support Services had strained the resources of the conference-servicing system, and problems such as the late submission and issuance of documentation had become more serious. Her delegation appreciated the practical difficulties facing conference services and supported the suggestion of the Committee on Conferences that the Office of Conference and Support Services should be provided with the necessary human, financial and material resources. Her delegation also hoped that the departments concerned would comply strictly with the rules relating to the timely submission of documents, as well as to their number and length.

74. The key to improving the quality of conference services lay in the initiative and sense of responsibility of the staff members concerned. Her delegation welcomed the decision by the Secretary-General to develop an effective and transparent system of responsibility and accountability for programme managers and hoped that such a system would also be applied within the Office of Conference and Support Services.

75. The ten-week rule for the submission of pre-session documentation and the six-week rule for its issuance were basic documentation control rules deriving from resolutions of the General Assembly; it was regrettable that they had not been conscientiously observed for some time. Her delegation hoped that the Secretariat would make every effort to comply with the six-week rule. Given the fact that the demand for documentation had far exceeded the capacity of the human resources of the Secretariat, the Office of Conference and Support Services and author departments should strengthen their coordination and adopt more positive measures to find an effective solution to the documentation crisis.

76. The staff responsible for producing documentation should be strengthened rather than weakened as a result of the restructuring of the Secretariat. In view of the importance of high-level training, it was gratifying to note that the Office of Conference and Support Services, after consultation with the Office of Human Resources Management, had developed a staff training course on the drafting of documents.

77. In conclusion, she hoped that the Office of Conference and Support Services would overcome its current difficulties and be able to ensure that efficient and high-quality conference services were in place to meet its increased workload

during the forthcoming year, which would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

78. Mr. ACCROMBESSI (Benin) said that, on the eve of its fiftieth anniversary, it was essential for the Organization to improve the quality of its conference services, without which it could not fulfil its role. The task of the Office of Conference and Support Services was no easy one, given the steady increase in the volume of work and the size of its staff, delays in the submission of documents, and the effects of technological innovations. Solutions were therefore needed to ensure a high quality of output at a reasonable cost, particularly in the issuance of pre-session documentation and summary records and the provision of competent interpretation services.

79. In that connection, his delegation supported the proposals of the Committee on Conferences to the effect that the Office of Conference and Support Services should be provided with the necessary human, financial and material resources to cope with its increased workload, inter alia, through investment in new technological applications and the accelerated introduction of the optical disk system.

80. His delegation shared the concern of the Committee on Conferences about the proposals to reduce the staff of the Office of Conference and Support Services, in particular in the staff of the Translation Services. If implemented, those proposals would, in fact, legitimize and aggravate an unsatisfactory situation which his delegation already considered unacceptable. It was a well known fact that the delays experienced by non-English-speaking delegations in obtaining working documents were due to the insufficient number of translators. To reduce that number still further would have unfortunate consequences for the functioning of the system in general and for the proper servicing of conferences in particular. Efforts should focus instead on achieving a significant reduction in the number of unimportant but expensive documents produced, limiting the length of statements, where possible, and starting and ending meetings on time. Delegations must bear their share of responsibility, since it was delegations which requested lengthy reports, often at inopportune times, made lengthy statements, which made additional meetings necessary, and arrived late at meetings, which could then not start on time.

81. With regard to another important area, staff training, he said that staff members in the Office of Conference and Support Services could not discharge their responsibilities effectively unless they received adequate training, including periodic refresher training. That applied particularly to précis-writers, translators and to interpreters.

82. Finally, the continued expansion of the Organization made it necessary to modify existing conference rooms and to construct new ones. The sound systems in the conference rooms also needed to be modernized.

83. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that his delegation was ready to support the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences, in particular the recommendations in paragraphs 18 (d) and 90 of its report (A/49/32). His

delegation was also ready to endorse the recommendations in the excellent report of the Secretary-General on a comprehensive study on conference services (A/C.5/49/34), although it was not convinced that an external consultant was needed to undertake the study.

84. Training for conference-servicing staff was a priority, not only in order to reduce dependence on temporary assistance, but also to ensure that the language and terminology used by the interpreters in United Nations meetings and by the translators in the Organization's documents were consistent with those currently used by Member States. His delegation looked forward to a detailed plan for staff training to be included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

85. Mr. DEINEKO (Russian Federation) commended the frankness and objectivity of the Secretariat, as exemplified by the Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services in his statement to the Fifth Committee, concerning the position with regard to the conference services of the Organization. He hoped that the Member States, in close cooperation with the Secretariat, would be able to resolve, even if only in part, the problems of conference-servicing in the United Nations.

86. On the question of the control and limitation of documentation, he said that the objective and positive position adopted by the Committee on Conferences provided a sound basis for the decisions to be taken later by the General Assembly. The Committee had identified the following main problems relating to the control and limitation of documentation: the uncontrolled growth in the volume of documentation, the increasing delays in the issuance of documents, and problems relating to the quality of documentation issued. Some of the problems were ultimately the responsibility of Member States, which should exercise restraint in their requests for conference services. The recommendations on that matter made by the Committee on Conferences deserved careful study.

87. His delegation took particular note of the clear position of the Committee on the quality, timeliness and effective utilization of resources, as well as on the need for strict compliance with the principle of the parity of the official and working languages of the United Nations. It shared the Committee's opinion regarding the need to develop a system of accounting that would provide fuller information on the true cost of conference services and to convey that information on a continuing basis to all the organs of the General Assembly.

88. The high hopes that his delegation had entertained with regard to the comprehensive study on conference services had not been fully realized. However, although the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/49/34) proposed no miraculous solutions, the efforts made by the Secretariat to identify the problems and to devise ways of addressing them could be expected to lead to positive results.

89. His delegation took note of the measures taken by the Office of Conference and Support Services, in the context of the comprehensive study, to devise indicators of quality, to introduce a system of demand forecasting and to

develop integrated approaches to the utilization of conference-servicing resources. It was to be hoped that those measures would make a major contribution towards improving the conference services of the Organization.

90. Lastly, his delegation supported the request of the Secretariat that a decision should be taken before the end of the current session of the General Assembly on the creation of unified conference services at Vienna, so that the new arrangements could be introduced with effect from 1 January 1995.

91. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union and Austria and generally supported the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences. He noted, however, that in paragraph 54 (d) of its report, the Committee on Conferences indicated that records would no longer be provided for the Committee on Applications for Review of Administrative Tribunal Judgements. In view of the specific criticism by the Tribunal on a matter related to that issue, his delegation wished to request that that recommendation of the Committee on Conferences should be reviewed during informal consultations.

92. Mr. KOURULA (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the recent increase in the demand for meetings services was due mainly to the increase in the level of activity of the Security Council and, consequently, of the Fifth Committee and ACABQ. Despite efforts to streamline the work of the General Assembly, new items were constantly being included in its agenda and the Secretariat had been unable to meet the demand which that increase had placed on the Office of Conference and Support Services. He therefore appealed to Member States to consider the high costs involved and to exercise restraint in requesting new reports from the Secretary-General. At the same time, however, author departments in the Secretariat should improve the quality and timeliness of documentation, which should be more action- and result-oriented.

93. The Nordic countries supported the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences concerning the provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly, with the exception of the recommendation relating to the Conference on Disarmament. That body differed from others in that it was a negotiating body rather than a deliberating organ and, as such, should be allowed to retain its verbatim records if it considered them necessary. He welcomed the initiatives taken by the governing bodies of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to dispense with summary records, as well as the measures taken by the Economic and Social Council to limit documentation. In addition to reducing their in-session documentation, UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF had decided, with respect to pre-session documentation, that Secretariat reports should normally not exceed three pages and should include sections identifying the report's objective, the means of implementation and the decision which the governing body was requested to make. While it would be more difficult for organs which comprised the entire membership of the Organization to follow that pattern, the Nordic countries strongly encouraged all bodies which were currently entitled to have meeting records to review the need for such records.

94. The Nordic countries supported the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences concerning compliance with the six-week rule for the issuance of pre-session documentation. Measures must be taken to make that rule viable.

95. Referring to meeting services, he said that all United Nations bodies should review their need for meetings in general, as well as the number and duration of meetings. Meetings should be carefully planned well in advance and only such documentation as was vital to the consideration of the item in question should be requested. On that basis, the Nordic countries could approve the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on Conferences, including the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1995. They supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the competent legislative organs should be invited to disband all bodies dealing with apartheid (A/49/32, para. 18 (c)). In general, they cautioned against the proliferation of thematic conferences which might undermine the central roles of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council.

96. On the question of improving the utilization of conference-servicing resources, he said that the Nordic countries supported the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that the General Assembly should urge those bodies whose utilization factor for the previous three sessions had been below the benchmark figure to reduce their requests for conference services. It would also be useful to expand the core sample in the statistical analysis of organs that had been meeting on a regular basis for the past decade to include the Main Committees of the General Assembly and ACABQ.

97. As for the issue of subsidiary bodies meeting away from their established headquarters, exceptions to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 40/243, should be granted only when there was documented proof of reduction in expenditure and/or a mandatory need to meet away from headquarters to enable the body concerned to perform its substantive tasks. The number of waivers should, moreover, be kept to a minimum.

98. The Nordic countries supported the additional organizational improvements proposed for the Office of Conference and Support Services. They shared the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/C.5/49/34) that a strengthening of communications between the Office, the rest of the Secretariat and representatives of Member States was urgently needed in order to attain the common goals.

99. The proposals for the management of conference services presented on the basis of the comprehensive study were well founded, particularly those concerned with the measurement of conference-servicing costs, demand forecasting, development of a benchmark system and the introduction of new performance indicators. The maximum use of existing technology and the introduction of technological innovations were of crucial importance to the Office of Conference and Support Services. The Nordic countries would welcome additional information on staffing levels and further analyses of how questions relating to the requirements set for the staffing of the Office could be resolved. They also supported demands for increased staff training.

100. Mr. Barimani (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

101. Ms. ROTHEISER (Chairman of the Committee on Conferences) said that the Committee on Conferences would continue to focus on the processing time and the volume of documentation. She hoped that the Fifth Committee would shortly be able to adopt the draft resolution on that matter by consensus.

102. Mr. SEVAN (Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services) said that it was gratifying to note that everyone concerned realized that both Member States and the Secretariat were faced with the same problem as far as documentation was concerned. He wished to make it very clear that there was no way to comply with the six-week rule if 14,000 pages of pre-session documentation had to be processed. No amount of financial resources poured into the Office of Conference and Support Services would alter that reality. Only by reducing the volume of documentation could the timely issuance of documentation be improved. He noted, however, that, far from recommending reductions in the volume of documentation, delegations had actually requested more reports.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.